

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 SP-02 L-01 INR-05

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PRS-01 PM-03 /036 W

----- 090660

R 171645Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY LOME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8942

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

C O N F I D E N T I A L L O M E 0602

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TO, CG, GB

SUBJECT: EYADEMA VISITS GABON AND ZAIRE

REF: LOME 893, APRIL 26, 1974

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. SUMMARY. PRESIDENT EYADEMA LEFT EARLY SATURDAY MARCH 15 FOR OFFICIAL VISIT TO GABON, TO BE FOLLOWED BY "PRIVATE VISIT" TO ZAIRE AT INVITATION OF PRESIDENT MOBUTU. END SUMMARY.

2. PRES. EYADEMA LEFT EARLY SATURDAY MARCH 15 IN HIS GRUMMAN GULFSTREAM II (LEASED FROM CHRYSLER CORP. WITH ALL-AMERICAN CREW) FOR FIVE-DAY "OFFICIAL VISIT" TO GABON. TOGO-PRESSE COVERAGE OF DEPARTURE SAYS LIBREVILLE VISIT WILL FURTHER STRENGTHEN TOGO'S COMMERCIAL TIES WITH GABON. TRIP TO ZAIRE IS DESCRIBED AS "WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF POLICY OF HARMONIZATION SET UP BETWEEN TOGO AND ZAIRE WHICH ALLOWS PERIODIC MEETINGS OF TWO CHIEFS OF STATE IN LOME OR KINSHASA, GIVING THEM OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE TOUR D'HORIZON OF GREAT PROBLEMS OF THE HOUR AS MUCH IN THEIR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES AS IN WORLD."

3. EYADEMA WAS ACCOMPANIED BY EIGHT OF HIS 12 MINISTERS:

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HUNLEDE (FOREIGN AFFAIRS), DJAFALO (HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES),

MIVEDOR (PUBLIC WORKS, MINES), GBEGBENI (JUSTICE, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, LABOR), EKLO (INTERIOR), KODJO (FINANCE, ECONOMY), DOGO (PLAN -- ALSO TEMPORARILY HOLDING COMMERCE, INDUSTRY, TRANSPORT), JOHNSON (INFORMATION, TELECOMMUNICATIONS). MIN EKLO WHO, AS ADMIN SECRETARY OF RPT, IS ONE OF MAIN SPARK PLUGS IN EYADEMA'S "AUTHENTICITE" MOVEMENT, ACTUALLY LEFT LOME DAY BEFORE WITH 200 "ANIMATEURS ET ANIMATRICES" INVITED BY PRESIDENT BONGO TO SHOW GABONESE PUBLIC HOW IT'S DONE. THEY WILL PERFORM IN LIBREVILLE STADIUM.

END UNCLASSIFIED

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4. LOME HAS BUZZED FOR NEARLY TWO WEEKS WITH RUMORS OF ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT AGAINST MOBUTU. ALLEGEDLY HIS CAR WAS HIT BY MACHINE-GUN FIRE, SOME BODYGUARDS AND DRIVER WERE KILLED, MOBUTU ALLEGEDLY HIT IN CHEST (OR ARM) SEVERAL TIMES. ONE VERSION EVEN HAD HIM IN PEKING FOR TREATMENT. EYADEMA REPORTEDLY DESPATCHED HIS PRESIDENTIAL DIRECTOR OF CABINET LACLE TO KINSHASA WHEN HE FIRST HEARD RUMORS; LACLE UNDERSTOOD TO HAVE REPORTED MOBUTU ALIVE AND WELL. STORIES, HOWEVER, REFUSE TO DIE OUT: EMBOFF OVER WEEKEND WAS SEPARATELY QUERIED ON SUBJECT BY HIGH-RANKING TOGOLESE GENDARMERIE OFFICER AND TOGOLESE ARMY LIEUTENANT WHO SERVES AS EYADEMA'S ADC AND VIP ESCORT. LATTER VOLUNTEERED HIS OPINION PURPOSE EYADEMA'S VISIT TO ZAIRE IS TO SEE MOBUTU FOR HIMSELF AND FIND OUT WHAT, IF ANYTHING, HAPPENED. PRESS COVERAGE DOES NOT RPT NOT INDICATE WHETHER CABINET MEMBERS WILL ALSO GO TO ZAIRE TO HAVE A LOOK.

5. COMMENT: MOBUTU, WHO TWICE VISITED TOGO IN 1974 AND WHOSE ARMED FORCES TRAINED TOGO'S PARACOMMANDO BATTALION, HAS BEEN STRONG INFLUENCE ON EYADEMA. MUCH OF LOCAL POLITICAL SCENE HAS ZAIRIAN FLAVOR: PARTY BUTTON AND FLAG, "ANIMATION" AS MEANS OF MOBILIZING POPULAR POLITICAL SUPPORT, ESPECIALLY FROM YOUTH, CEASELESS BUILDUP OF PERSONALITY CULT, CAMPAIGN TO FORCE ABANDONMENT OF CHRISTIAN (AND MOSLEM) NAMES -- MUCH, IF NOT ALL OF THESE GOT ORIGINAL IMPULSE FROM EKLO VISIT TO KINSHASA IN SUMMER 1973. WHILE SOME LOCAL OBSERVERS THINK TOGOLESE-ZAIRAIN RELATIONS ARE COOLER NOW THAN ONE YEAR AGO

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(MOBUTU'S APRIL 27 VISIT (REFTEL) COULD BE CONSIDERED APOGEE), MOBUTU'S SURVIVAL IN POWER IS UNDOUBTEDLY IMPORTANT TO EYADEMA. LATTER HAS MADE SO MUCH OF RELATIONSHIP IN PAST THAT HE HAS IN EYES OF TOGOLESE PUBLIC IDENTIFIED HIMSELF WITH MOBUTU. EMBASSY WOULD WELCOME KINSHASA'S OBSERVATIONS ON VISIT. RAWLS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CHIEF OF STATE VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LOME00602
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750092-1090
From: LOME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750345/aaaabnwq.tel
Line Count: 113
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 75 LOME 893, 75 APRIL 26, 75 1974
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25 AUG 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <26 AUG 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EYADEMA VISITS GABON AND ZAIRE
TAGS: PFOR, TO, CG, GB, (EYADEMA, ETIENNE)
To: STATE LIBREVILLE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006